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## ETHICS OF CHILD-STUDY.

CHILDREN have been the delight and solicitude of their mothers from the beginning of the race ; they have brightened by their presence the miserable household of the cliff-dweller, and the palaces of the great of all times ; the love of children inspires even the brute creation, and is the sweetest flower of human life. Eternal youth is the choicest privilege of the Olympian deities, and their most cherished gifts to favored mortals. To be young, means to be happy—such is the fancy of a multitude. Yet, strange to say, with all this worship of youthfulness, there is little to be found in ancient mythologies of “any real child-worship or artistic concept of the child as god. Not even Rama and Krishna, or the Greek Eros, who had a sanctuary at Thespiae in Boeotia, are beautiful, sweet, naïve child-pictures ; much less even is Hercules, the infant, strangling the serpents,” or other such mythological children. They are symbolical, but not real.

When Jesus of Nazareth gathered the little ones about him, when he called out: “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven” ; when he warned the populace: “Verily, verily, I say unto you: except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven,”—then the gospel of childhood was given to the world. The Christ-child became the symbol of holy childhood—all children became sanctified in him and through him. Wondrous tales sprang up, all having the child Jesus for their center ; the birth of the world’s Saviour, his lowly bed in the manger, the light that went out from his sweet presence ; the sacred mystery of

the relation of mother and child, represented by the Madonna who was the theme of many a poet's song, the motif of many an exalted work of art: all these influences gradually brought about a new concept of, and gave a deeper meaning to, childhood. Looking at Raphael's wonderful painting in the Dresden Gallery, with the glorious Christ-child in the arms of purest motherhood, with the radiant faces of angel-children dotting the farthest depths of the sky: every one, even the non-believer, or non-Christian, is inspired with a sense of indescribable rapture and reverence; and around the Christmas-tree are woven the golden threads of Christ-child legends that entwine the hearts of tender babes with sweet, but irresistible force.

Since then, childhood has become a sacred thing to us, and we have learnt to revere in the intuitiveness and directness of children's feelings and instincts the revelation of a divine power which has become lost to the adult who allows himself to be governed, and hedged in, by numberless prejudices and conventionalities that have estranged his soul from the truly eternal which speaks in a low voice to the ears of unsophisticated children. Poets, and the verdict of the people in many lands, have expressed this thought in most varied language.

"He hath grown so foolish-wise  
He cannot see with childhood's eyes;  
He hath forgot that purity  
And lowliness which are the key  
Of Nature's mysteries."

"Childhood," says Ruskin, "often holds a truth in its feeble fingers which the grasp of manhood cannot retain, and which it is the pride of utmost age to recover."

"And still to childhood's sweet appeal  
The heart of genius turns,  
And more than all the sages teach  
From lisping voices learns."—*Whittier*.

"Children always turn toward the light," says Hare. The following is Schopenhauer's sentiment: "Every child is, to a cer-

tain extent, a genius, and every genius is, to a certain extent, a child." And Ruskin again: "The whole difference between a man of genius and other men . . . is that the first remains a child, seeing with the large eyes of children, in perpetual wonder, not conscious of much knowledge,—conscious, rather, of infinite ignorance, and yet infinite power." (*Stones of Venice.*)

There is also a well-known passage from George Eliot's *Silas Marner*: "We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward, and the hand may be a little child's."

To preserve the peculiar force of youthfulness even in the declining years of our life, has always been the most ardent desire of active people. I mean that youthfulness which is directness, spontaneity, and innocence of feeling even though there were sad realisations of the power for evil; that youthfulness which is nearest to the fountain-head from which the race has sprung, and which exhibits the race-character most faithfully; that youthfulness which remains instinctively in touch with the original forces of life which make for godliness, for purity, for righteousness. I mean that youthfulness of which Guyau says: "To remain young long, to remain a child even, in the spontaneity and tenderness of the heart, to preserve ever, not only in the outer behavior, but in the inner life, a certain lightness, a certain elasticity—this is the best way to rule our lives; for what greater force is there than youth?" I mean that youthfulness which perpetuates the golden age of childhood, *die heilige Kinderzeit*, the heaven of infancy. As Alexander F. Chamberlain, in his valuable book, *The Child and Childhood in Folk-Thought*, puts it: "The Paradise that man lost, the Eden from which he has been driven, is not the God-planted Garden by the banks of Euphrates, but the 'happy days of angel infancy,' and 'boyhood's time of June,' the childhood out of which in the fierce struggle for existence the race has rudely grown, and back to which, for its true salvation, it must learn to make its way again. As he who was at once a genius and child, said nearly

twenty centuries ago: ‘Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.’”

If it is beatitude to *remain* young, should we not at least grant this bliss to those who are still young? Should we not allow our children to remain young as long as they can, should we not do all in our power to “lengthen the days of plastic infancy” and of spontaneous childhood? But are we not in reality impatient to have them grow old before their time? Are we not artificially hastening and stimulating their development so that they be little men and women, with knowing eyes and *blasé* smiles, suffering from fatigue and ennui, being graduates and holding diplomas before they have shed their first set of teeth? Or toiling and pining away in stores and factories with their wee, weak bodies before their life-forces have in any way matured? The wicked struggle for existence in a world which is ruled by greed and passion, by emulation and chaffering, has driven them out of the paradise of childhood, and it remains closed to them forever. The poets sing of the lipping voices to whom the genius turns for inspiration; the philosophers envy the child’s intuitive power to recognise the divine truth: but in our homes and schools we speedily check this spontaneity and directness to substitute conventional modes of thinking and artificial systems.

There is a great gap between our theories and our practice, in this as in other things. It is true: there are *spoiled* children,—such that have been coddled and indulged until they became intolerable caricatures, self-important, self-willed, self-conscious; without humility and reverence, their hearts swayed by every impulse and desire. Parental love whose product is an unchildlike child, deserves not the fair name of love: it is ignorance, it is vanity, it is self-indulgence. No mother’s child is spoiled who loves her child more than herself. The corruption of the sweetness of a child’s nature is wrought by such parents who idolise and unduly exalt *themselves* in their children, or who treat them as instruments of pleasure and play, or who are too weak not to move along the line of the least resistance.

As a rule, what of education we give our children is rarely a

discreet guidance, mostly a direct interference with their natural instincts and legitimate needs. The majority of children are ever on the defensive, and consequently suspicious of their so-called educators in whom they see their natural enemies and the utilisers of their innocent pleasures,—the embodiment of brute force that wages war against their spontaneous self-assertion. Many a child will never show his true face to his parents or teachers, and hides his real feelings in the deepest recesses of his heart. Watch him when he thinks himself unnoticed, when he is at play with himself or with his companions, and you may experience many a new revelation. The “naughtiness” of children, their disobedience and stubbornness, their lies and what not, are often but the manifestation of the sense of injustice done them, of not being rightly understood anyway, or sympathised with from a *child's* point of view; they may be symptoms of self-defence and rebellion against an authority which was not of their choosing and which they do not feel as being genuinely beneficial.

Think only of the sufferings of the “stupid” child. Real stupidity is a great affliction but which rarely receives the sympathy it stands so much in need of. But many children who are thought stupid are not stupid at all. They may have certain defects of a physical nature which can be remedied, or their schooling and education in general is of a kind that is not adapted to their special needs. If a juggling with figures, erroneously called arithmetic, is made a test of intelligence, then the constructive or artistic genius of a child may remain undiscovered; and if parents and teachers judge those children to be bright who can, by so-called parsing, arrange the dead bones of the language in artificial order, or who shine out from the others by brilliant recitations and unchildlike discussions of adult problems at graduation exercises: then the dreamer, the philosopher, and the poet will pass for dunces. It is only too true that many of our greatest minds have been considered absolute failures during their school career, not to say in the homes of their childhood. How many of them had to assert their native excellency against the most violent resistance of those who were too blind to perceive the divine spark in their children's souls!

There is the case of a little boy reported by John Dalziel in the *School Journal* of December 26, 1896. I quote from this report the following: "The mother's statement in this case was 'that ever since he was a baby he had given her a great deal of trouble from a habit of knocking things over.' As his eyes were perfect, and he could see the objects and play with them, his parents did not suspect there was any defect in his sight, and consequently he was punished for what appeared to be wilful mischief, and that which seemed still worse, trying to lie himself out of the punishment by saying he did not see the things there. This determined persistence in lying was the cause of all his afflictions; it was, however, accompanied by an aggravating habit of making grimaces at the person questioning him, a sure sign of natural depravity. As is frequently the case with children when they know they are being punished wrongfully, this boy resented the ill-treatment by stoic endurance while under the rod, thereby gaining the additional stigma of being vicious and incorrigible.

"With such a character, gained at home, he was taken to an asylum for feeble-minded infants for the purpose of being disciplined.

"At first, in the new surroundings, he brightened up, but it was not long before the teacher had full evidence of his obstinacy. The importance of beginning right was fully understood, and the teacher, taking an object in her hand and holding it before the boy's face, asked him, while he was to all appearances looking directly at it, 'What is the name of the object in my hand?' The child twisted his face up, and with a grimace asked, 'What object?' Here was confirmation of the bad character he brought with him. His head was held to face the object and a correct answer demanded; then followed the usual answer, 'I cannot see anything'; for such obstinacy and prevarication there was but one remedy.

"The child was desirous of pleasing his teacher and watched her closely so that he could occasionally name the object held up; this, however, only made his conduct at other times less tolerable. As a crucial test the teacher would hold a pin before the boy's face,

and upon his statement that he could not see anything, the point would be brought in contact with his nose, producing a cry and the statement that 'it is a pin'; severe punishment followed this experiment.

"Fortunately for the child he became sick. An oculist after examining him stated that there was a defect in his sight, but the exact nature of it was not easily determined.

"After this the child was treated less severely, but all his endeavors to prove himself truthful were futile, and the poor little fellow pined away slowly and died, without any adequate cause in the shape of physical disease.

"At the request of the oculist, the boy's brain was given to him for examination; he found that the nerves of sight were disconnected, which would render it impossible for the child to see any object in front of his face, but that he could see all objects on either side of him; and only by twisting his head and shutting an eye would he be able to see things in front of him.

"The remorse felt by his former teachers can be readily understood, but what a picture it is! Who can appreciate the acute mental suffering of the infant when punished by its mother for untruths it did not tell? Think of the effect upon the mind of a child deprived of food, kept in confinement, and flogged for failing to comply with requirements it had no means of comprehending!"

From my own experience, I might quote many cases. It is, e. g., interesting how differently children impress different observers, their parents and teachers. Following are a few examples<sup>1</sup>:

CHILD AS REPORTED FROM HOME :	CHILD IN SCHOOL :
Conscientious.	Careless.
Brilliant.	Well-meaning, but backward and rather dull.
Full of application.	Lacking application.
Depraved (!).	Very good and reliable.
Passionate.	Self-controlled.

It may seem difficult to harmonise such diametrically opposed statements, and yet they indicate nothing but different reactions of

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the author's *A Working System of Child Study for Schools*, Bardeen, Syracuse, p. 27.

the child upon different environments, and if studied with a satisfactory knowledge of the determining factors, they will serve to illuminate the secret recesses of the child-soul, and lead towards a better understanding of its needs.

But how often does it happen that these different manifestations are compared and studied intelligently? How many children are there who go through life misunderstood and misjudged!

That there is a very distinct relation between *health* and *conduct*, is realised by a very few. Let me illustrate this fact by a few examples from my note-book<sup>1</sup>:

There is an interesting case of a girl who was eleven years old at the date of the latest report. Formerly having been reported to be of fair intelligence and an average worker, though being a spoiled child, all at once she seemed to degenerate. The teachers complained of her apathy; she could not answer the simplest questions and was falling away behind her class. She was thought either stupid or negligent. Most of her time was spent in play; she appeared indifferent, lazy, making no effort. In sewing alone were good work and satisfactory interest reported.

When the case was referred to the school physician, the following diagnosis was submitted: Certain deformities of mouth, teeth, etc., indicative of degenerative tendency. Enlarged tonsils, a nasal catarrh, adenoid vegetations; a mouth-breather; slightly deaf and nearsighted. Frequent headaches. This diagnosis of course explains all the symptoms above described. The child did not answer the simplest questions because she did not hear them; she could not follow blackboard directions because she did not see them. On the whole, her physical condition made it impossible for her to make mental exertion and to do justice to the work of the class. She was placed under treatment; the tonsils were resected, the vegetations removed. Then there was a general improvement, even though it was indeed a slow process to overcome acquired habits which had been allowed to develop during a relatively long period.

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted as above, pp. 34-37.

Attention must be called to the bad effect which nasal obstructions and enlarged tonsils have upon the general mental habitus of a child; mouth-breathers should be carefully singled out and placed under treatment. There are often aural defects resulting from such conditions so that the sense of hearing is impaired. There is such a large percentage of children whose hearing, or vision, is defective and who, their trouble not being rightly understood, are classed among the dull or obstinate and treated accordingly, that too much caution and conscientious observation cannot be recommended to teachers and parents.

The case of a boy of six: formerly the pride of the kindergarten, in spite of his extreme youth. Showed fine reasoning ability, was deeply interested in everything, bright, active, inventive. Then all of a sudden the teachers noticed that he looked very pale, seemed tired, had lost interest, and everything was such an effort to him. Doctor's report: "Indications of a mild form of chorea"—that curse of precocity. Rest and treatment cured the boy.

Very instructive is the case of a colored girl of twelve. She had never been very bright or attentive, according to the teachers' reports. Yet she seemed cheerful. Lazy and without effort. The teachers of her class recommended her dismissal for general inability. A consultation with the mother and the school physician revealed the fact that the girl was suffering from *grand mal* (epilepsy) and was generally in poor health. On some days she was really too miserable to go to school, and yet she insisted on going. A few times, she was overcome by attacks of vertigo in the street, in going home from school, and had to be attended to by passers-by.

Time and treatment were granted her. Gradually she picked up and improved steadily. The later reports showed a very different girl: intelligent, bright, quick. The teacher who had been most emphatic in demanding her dismissal, wrote: "She is one of the girls in the class upon whom I can best depend. Is anxious to do her best, and is doing very good work." The only indications of her trouble still left were a certain sensitiveness, excitable temper, occasional headaches, and nausea.

These cases teach a tremendous lesson. We cannot mould

the children at will—their souls are not a white sheet upon which we may write what we please. We must study each individual child so as to understand him, we must respect the child's psyche as something divine. Children are not given to us as a chattel to do with them as our fancy may direct—they are a sacred charge entrusted to our care; they are a draft upon the future for whose faithful satisfaction we are held inexorably responsible by the generations that come after us. In a voice of thunder spake the God of Moses, and in the awful majesty of his words he revealed a divine truth: "I will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate me!"

Child-study as inaugurated by eminent psychologists of the present day, is a new appeal to the conscience of educators. It revives the gospel of divine childhood as it was brought into the world by him whose heart reached out even unto the little children whom he suffered to come to him and forbade them not, and who was himself born a child of lowliness and deprivation, whose entire career from birth to crucifixion was one divine martyrdom.

The field covered by these modern researches into the nature of the child-soul and its development is vast, and the results are, even though as yet fragmentary, quite gratifying. Not everything made manifest by this new science is new; but it is given new force and significance, and it is made better understood in its causality and in its relations.

If I venture to call attention to a few facts as disclosed or freshly emphasised by child-study, it is with the consciousness of the inadequacy of an attempt to do justice to the subject in the few pages at my disposal. But what is needed first of all is the realisation of the fact that child-study has an ethical aspect, and that it is the solemn duty of every parent and teacher to be a student of child-nature.

A child's evolution, physical, mental, and moral, as the customary classification has it, culminates in the formation of character. The young soul passes through a number of successive stages, or periods, all differing from one another, and each con-

tributing its specific share to the individuality which is to be. Each stage needs a special recognition, and special treatment. To say that the infant is a very different being from the primary child, the child from the boy, the boy from the youth, the boy from the girl, sounds like a mere truism. But few of us know how great these differences are, and how careful and detailed a recognition they require. It is a new discovery that there are what is called *nascent* ("budding") periods for very specific capacities and studies, when the soul strikes out on new paths; if these periods are ignored, or allowed to pass by unutilised, an opportunity may be lost never to return. The part the play-interest plays in the development of the child-soul, has only recently been better understood. Let us be reminded that there are nascent periods even for such things as morality and religion. The young child is neither a moral nor a religious being in the strict sense of these terms. He is a savage, as it were, with primitive notions; he is a heathen and idolater. There are distinct stages in the evolution of ethical and religious ideas and feelings, and much is the need of wisdom on the part of the educator in following these and making the right use of them.

It is especially in the pubescent and adolescent periods (twelve to eighteen or twenty) when these developments culminate, and when consequently our young people need the greatest care and the most discreet guidance. Why is it that there is so much of mental and moral disturbance in the minds of our young people? Why are their ideals vague and fragmentary, often low and degrading—why are they, especially our girls, so frequently found deficient in health and vigor, in genuine enthusiasm and the power of self-control and endurance, at an age which should mark the height of vital energy? Why is there so much morbid nervousness and harassing unhappiness in the family life? In a large measure this is due to the fact that we have yielded to false standards in the education of our adolescent children—that we do not surround them at this critical period of their life with the right influences; that we fail to understand their physical and psychical needs; that we treat them all alike after the same pattern. "About the time puberty makes its appearance," says Dr. Christopher, "we find the modern

girl is either preparing to enter High School or has already entered. This is the period in school life when the greatest labor is thrown upon the student. There is a change to new studies and an excessive amount of the old ones; the long hours of study call for an amount of labor the child is incapable of supplying, or if she does the work, she expends at the time energy which should be stored up for future use." With the boy of this period, the case is similar, though the development of the two sexes runs by no means parallel; yet the mistaken way in which the right principle of co-education is put in practice, forces boys and girls into a parallel course of study which does neither sex full justice. The adolescent child requires much greater care and study than has been his or her lot heretofore, and many lives have become warped and ineffectual because of lack of discretion and proper influence at this stage.

Proper influence at any stage ought not to mean the suppression of the child's native instincts and a substitution of our own ideas, notions, opinions, prejudices, habits, and the like in the children's mind in place of what would be the outcome of their self-activity. A child is so easily misled into an imitation of the ways of his companions, his parents and teachers. He is naturally imitative, and open to suggestive influences—ready to follow the example of those around him. "Nothing," says La Rochefoucauld, "is so contagious as example. It lets loose in our lives those bad actions which shame would have kept imprisoned." And Hosea Ballou said in one of his sermons: "Education commences at the mother's knee, and every word spoken within the hearsay of little children tends towards the formation of character."

No temptation is greater for the educating parent and teacher than to impress the children under their care with the importance and infallibility of their own opinions and peculiarities. No inheritance is so sure as that of prejudices. Lew Wallace, the author of *Ben Hur*, in speaking of the Sadducean views and partisanship of the father of his hero, says: "In the natural order of things, these circumstances and conditions, opinions and peculiarities, would have descended to the son as certainly and really, as any portion of his father's estate." And in our modern times, it is con-

sidered the natural order of things that the son of a Democrat be also a Democrat; or that it is the divine right of parents to have their children grow up in the same religion they cherish themselves. This right, however, must be disputed. I am aware that many will take exception to this view. And I can sympathise with the opposing attitude. I know from personal experience that such things are matters of emotion rather than of reflexion. I have myself felt those heartpangs which come to us when our children develop ideas and ambitions foreign to our own cherished hopes. And yet, I disagree with the doctrine of parental dictatorship over their children's consciences.

I believe in the divine right of each child to be himself, and not the copy of anybody else, even be it his parents. There is enough they will take from us unavoidably. Indeed, let us set before our children noble examples, but not so much for imitation as for inspiration. Let us inspire them with a love for the beautiful, an enthusiasm for the right and true, a reverence for the eternal: but allow them at the same time to preserve their individual taste, to feel according to their own temperament, to create for the abstract conception of eternity and infinity their own symbols. Inspire them with respect for the courage with which you stand up for your own convictions; but do not insist that your convictions must hold sway over their consciences. A conviction is a growth, and this growth is dependent upon many determining factors not easily understood and never fully controlled. A conviction is the expression of an individual attitude, and this attitude is our own, and can be assumed by another as little as he can stand where we stand. The same object will appear very different to each one of us, because there are a thousand and one differences in the power of vision. If we respect our children's individual attitude instead of forcing them into the Procrustean bed of our own, they will learn to respect our own and other people's conviction in return, and that will be a decided gain for character. Our opinions may be erroneous, and if we confuse respect for ourselves with respect for our opinions, we may lose both at one stroke. "What thinkest thou of his opinion?" asks the Clown of Malvolio in *Twelfth*

*Night*, and Malvolio answers: "I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve his opinion." Let that suffice unto us: let us teach our children to think nobly of our soul, our aspirations, our character, our ideals, our courage, our virtue and reverence,—no matter whether they share our opinions. "Truth," says Wendell Phillips, "is forever absolute, but opinion is truth filtered through the moods, the blood, the disposition of the spectator." "The opinions of men who think," says Hamerton, "are always growing and changing, like living children." And Lowell: "The foolish and the dead alone never change their opinion."

Who knows but that we may change our present attitude towards certain problems before long? Can we undertake to thrust our present opinion into the growing brain of a child that it may there become the starting-point of a growth which we cannot control? It may be easy enough for an adult to liberate himself of an opinion and change his mind; but those notions which have been implanted into our souls during the plastic years of our childhood, have become encysted there, as it were, mostly in a pathological way, and form the basis of those prejudices and idiosyncrasies which haunt us all through life and make us one-sided and intolerant.

We ought to develop and jealously preserve in our children the ability to think for themselves, and should not grieve too deeply when their thought leads them to other results than our own, as long as they aspire to the highest, as long as there is a noble purpose, a love for truth and righteousness, and sympathy and ready helpfulness for others. Unless we develop in them that power of independent thinking, they will fall easy victims to every popular folly. "The greatest part of mankind," says Johnson, "have no other reason for their opinions than that they are in fashion." This fact is the sad cause from which, in times of excitement and frenzy, the mob mind arises,—carrying away before its outburst all that is of reason and duty. Children who will not be allowed to learn the art of thinking and deciding for themselves, will never develop that strength of character which is the best safeguard of the moral life, and which will produce that noble intrepidity from which springs the power to cling steadfastly to our convictions, even

though an infuriated multitude may surge around us with threats: that calmness and serenity of mind which found expression from the lips of the sufferer on the cross: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Will you not rather have your son follow this exalted example than join the common herd of those who find it "easier as well as more advantageous to conform themselves to other men's opinions, than to bring them over to theirs"? (La Bruyère).

As a matter of fact, no one's opinion fits any other individuality without modification. Our duty as educators is to put the child into such a position that he may work out his own salvation, his individual destiny. Of the educator's example, U. S. Commissioner of Education, Dr. Harris, has said somewhat paradoxically, but with much of significance: "Of course the teacher should be an example, but she should be careful that no one follows her." That is good doctrine. The same thought was expressed by W. E. Channing thus: "The great end of instruction is not to stamp our minds on the young, but to stir up their own; not to make them see with our eyes, but to look inquiringly and steadily with their own; not to give them a definite amount of knowledge, but to inspire a fervent love of truth; not to form an outward regularity, but to touch inward springs; not to burden the memory, but to quicken and strengthen the power of thought, to awaken the conscience, so that they may discern and approve for themselves what is everlastingly right and good."

Every child is unique; and the fond mother who strokes her boy's curly head caressingly, and imagines there is no other like him, is certainly right. He may not perhaps excel all others, but he is, with all his possible faults, a most fascinating study to the lover of child-nature, different from all others, a combination of forces absolutely unique and not admitting of duplication, full of mysteries and potential revelations. To do justice to this .

" . . . sweet, new blossom of Humanity,  
Fresh fallen from God's own home to flower on earth,"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gerald Massey.

so that it may bloom forth in all its peculiar beauty, we must carefully study him. Just because he is unlike other children, it will not suffice to treat him as any child may be treated. Certainly, all children have some things in common, but not all simultaneously, or in the same proportion. To speak of the "average" child is an absurdity. He does not exist; he is a mere abstraction. It is idle to make rules for average children, for every living child is an exception to the rule. If we want to do the right thing educationally, we must remember Goethe's word:

"Ach, wir können die Kinder nach unserm Sinne nicht formen!  
So wie Gott sie uns gab, so muss man sie haben und lieben,  
Sie erziehen auf's Beste und jeglichen lassen gewähren;  
Denn der eine hat die, der andere andere Gaben;  
Jeder braucht sie und jeder ist doch nur auf eigene Weise  
Gut und glücklich . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Respect for the individual soul of the child! To suppress it is crime, and to murder the soul of a living child is as wicked as to starve his body.

"Impartially their talents scan,  
Just education makes the man."<sup>2</sup>

As Plato put it: "Do not train boys to learning by force and harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each."

To be sure, it is not an easy task to scan the talents of a child impartially so as to make a just education possible; for all of us are more or less influenced by preferences and dislikes; and to discover with any degree of accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each, requires much tact, insight, patience, love, and discretion.

<sup>1</sup> In my imperfect translation:

"Fashion we cannot our children conforming with preconceived notions!  
God has fashioned their souls, and as such we must cherish and love them,  
Train them as best we know how, and allow each one his own freedom;  
For each child is endowed with gifts and talents to suit him;  
Differing all, each doing his own work, each only in his way  
Good and happy . . ."

<sup>2</sup> Gay, *To a Mother*.

Full play must be granted to all the different activities of the mind, so that whatever talent there is may manifest itself. There must be as much freedom from restraint as is compatible with the circumstances under which the child lives; and whatever direction and help is offered, must be administered with the utmost care so that the spontaneity of the child, his confidence in parent and teacher, be not checked. Too easily is a child discouraged, or repelled, and then his inner self, his true self, recedes into the deepest hiding-place of his own little heart, and his outward self will forever be a sham and conventionality, or he will spend himself in resentment and unhappiness. Let us not forget Goethe's word:

"Differing all, each doing his own work, each only in his way  
Good and happy . . . ."

An instance may be quoted as reported by a woman of deep insight into the workings of the child-heart,—which sheds a flood of light upon the feelings of many children, and upon the mistakes we sometimes make in dealing with individual souls.

"I knew an instance of a child whose violent outbreak of temper was followed by such a tenderness of contrition as overcame his pride, which did not like to say that he 'was sorry' he had been wrong. Nevertheless, the love for his mother and the distress at having grieved her overswept all other feelings. He watched his chance when she was alone to creep to her side and say aloud to her the words that for three nights he had been saying over to himself in bed, though the daylight took away his courage to speak out. And the mistaken mother, instead of gathering her boy to her heart, as no doubt she longed to do, felt that this was a God-given opportunity to labor with him over the sinfulness of his evil temper, with the result that never in all her after-life, though he went wrong many times, did he turn to the heart of his mother for pardon and pity and love. She, alas! did not know the harm she did, and he, poor child, did not know what it was that drove the flood of his sorrowful penitence back into his own heart, and sent him away angry and sore, and sorry that he had spoken at all."

(Mary Lowe Dickinson.)

In recognising the differences of our children, let us not worry that they *are* different. If they are quick to temper, let us not complain: they may also be quick to repent, and quick to learn. If they be lazy, let us be patient: they may need more sympathy than blame. "Perhaps we should not attribute much more praise or blame to the industry of one individual and laziness of another than we do to the plumpness of one and the leanness of another." (H. S. Curtis, *Child Study Monthly*, Dec. 1897.) There are *causes* for all these differences, and while each peculiarity may have its drawbacks, it has also its advantages. We have only to take care to recognise the real needs of the child. There are few but will fit into some groove of peculiar usefulness,—let us be content with this reflexion, and not try to force a child best fitted for one place, into another which strikes our fancy better. If there were not these manifold differences and varieties, how could this race of ours exist, with the multiplicity of service needed to keep up and develop civilisation and culture? *Service* is the key-note of genuine success. As long as our child can render service, however humble, as long as he can fill his particular place, so long let us be thankful. But this success will be largely of our own making: only by understanding, and ministering to, the individual needs of our child, shall we make—or unmake him.

Says James Cotter Morison in his Essay on Gibbon: "A good education is generally considered as reflecting no small credit on its possessor; but in the majority of cases it reflects credit on the wise solicitude of his parents or guardians, rather than on himself." And let us be sure about one thing: a day laborer needs just as good an education in his way, as a college professor in his; for education is not a matter of grammar or geometry,—it is a matter of growth, of spiritual maturity, of fulness of serviceableness, of character.

It is a not uncommon experience that mothers who in the first pride of their sweet dignity will protest there is none like their boy, will gradually begin to wonder in the deepest depths of their grieved hearts "whether other bright women could have such stupid children." To these afflicted creatures we may extend this

consolation: whatever apparent faults we may discover in our children, however provokingly rude, or irresponsive, or stupid they may appear at times, there is hope they will turn out all right in the end. What harasses us may be only symptoms of growth with its seeming inconsistencies, capers, and caprices. Only let the child be himself; know him, love him, trust him, be patient and discreet; lead him gently onward: and he will repay your solicitude a thousandfold.

From an ethical point of view, the moral and religious evolution of the child-soul is of particular import. It has been indicated before that this evolution takes place according to biological laws. These laws must be studied and regarded; we should not try to force this development prematurely, but give each stage its due. The child passes in this evolution through stages which are broadly parallel to those through which the race has passed; and as we cannot expect a Zulu to grasp the ethics of Kant or Spencer, likewise we cannot hope to make a child of school age appreciate abstract morality or the doctrine of salvation. There is a long way from the egoism of the savage and the baby to the altruism of the moral adult of modern civilisation. But if it be true as regards children generally that great caution must be exercised in dealing with the problem of their ethical and religious education, it is particularly true that the moral adjustment of the *individual* child is the result of very individual conditions and influences. Prof. Earl Barnes has shown with considerable force "that how we think the child *ought* to feel has nothing to do with our problem; that it is with us to discover how the child *does* feel." "Average" notions will help very little in treating particular cases, and every child has a very particular mind of his own. His individual attitude and its motives must be understood, his individual stage of development must be considered. Conscience is of slow growth, and a very sensitive plant at that. I have therefore more and more approached the conclusion that in the matter of ethics and religion individual methods should be employed almost exclusively. Class instruction may be a helpful adjunct in the objective part of this training—concerning the history of religions, or purely academical disputa-

tions of intellectual problems in ethics. But then its place is not in the early years of childhood; it will properly be found at the stage when the child has laid the foundation of his subjective morality and religious attitude. So-called ethical and religious lessons in schools, Sunday schools, and the like, are of service in certain directions, at certain stages, and under certain conditions. However, as they are generally understood and conducted they are apt to do more harm than good. Their effect is mostly nothing but a purely external conformity to established institutions, a surrender of independent thinking to other men's opinions: cant and hypocrisy in all their forms. True religiosity is a matter of spiritual growth within the individual: it is that which is most peculiarly our own, and which in its deepest meaning we cannot share with anybody as it is incommunicable. Home and school and the entire educational environment will indeed exert a powerful influence upon the growth of the ethico-religious character; but this influence should be one of *spirit* rather than direct teaching if it is to be genuinely wholesome. Direct moral and religious influence must wait its chances, and these chances come at different moments with different children, and are of so subtle and evanescent character that it requires all the alertness and tact of the educator to turn them to best use. The temperament of the child is an important factor. There are distinct differences between the children in attitude and idealism.

In this respect, two main groups may be distinguished: those whose development is gradual, and those who pass through periods of storm and stress, doubts and awakenings. Professor Starbuck, of Clark University, in his paper on the "Psychology of Religion" (*American Journal of Psychology*, Oct., 1897), speaks thus of adolescents: "One can scarcely think of a single pedagogical rule in regard to religious training after the end of childhood which might not violate the deepest needs of the person whom it is the purpose to help. The first demand is that the teacher or spiritual leader shall know something of the case he is to deal with,—his training, his temperament and the present trend of his life. It requires careful reading into human nature to know what a person needs and is

ripe for; the magic stroke which is to change a child into a man. . . . Each stage should be a preparation for the next, so that the person may emerge naturally and evenly into a strong, beautiful, spiritual manhood or womanhood."

The immediate result of this new aspect of child-life will be a revision of all our educational standards. Mass education must give way to individual methods. Home and school are both affected by the gospel of childhood. We must have more intelligent parenthood, and a different view of the meaning of school education. "Soon the entire curriculum will have to be reconstructed not with a view to the needs of adult life, but with a view to the needs of the growing organism at each stage of its varying development, the proper food and nourishment at one stage having no necessary logical connexion whatever with the requirements of later stages, or even being a positive poison if given after that period—growths probably being demanded at certain periods which must later be sloughed off, absorbed, or transformed." (A. Caswell Ellis, "Philosophy of Education," *Pedagogical Seminary*, Oct., 1897.)

Home and school must necessarily co-operate to bring about the best results in an individual valuation and treatment of our children. There must exist a relation of utmost frankness and mutual confidence between parent and teacher. They have a mission in common, and this mission is a noble one indeed: to cherish a young blossom on the tree of humanity that it may thrive and bear fruit to be a blessing to succeeding generations.

Happier than now will be the days of childhood when each one of our beloved little ones receives back from our hands his birthright—that of being himself. And happier shall we be, also, who shall be blessed in our children. Verily, the divine message is full of profound meaning: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Yea, truly, by living with our children, by observing and lovingly studying their childish ways, by entering into their spirit: a new revelation will come to us, a new life of unspeakable sweetness and tenderness and felicity. We shall learn once more to be one with nature and the eternal powers that manifest themselves in her

and work for perfection and righteousness. We shall once more distinguish the dross from the gold, and cast out the sham, the false, the conventional, and return to what is genuine and true and everlasting. We shall find the veritable fountain of youth, and bathing in it, the dust gathered from the roadside of our weary lives will wash off, and we shall be clean and fresh and vigorous. Eden will open its gates once more for us; in the paradise where our children live, we, too, may once more taste of the sweetness of all the flowers and fruits therein, even though we may have sinfully eaten from the tree whose fruit made us conscious of good and evil and placed us in danger of spiritual death. And love will then reign supreme, and forgiveness, and mutual understanding, so that we live together with our brothers and sisters in one communion of souls, bearing and respecting our differences, and uniting our forces in the common cause of humanity. And all that will be the work of our children from whose eyes there will come this new revelation. From the mouth of tender babes will come the gospel of good-will to men. Truly it has been said: "The debt of humanity to the little children has not yet been told." In the words of our American poet:

"Ah, what would the world be to us  
 If the children were no more ?  
 We should dread the desert behind us  
     Worse than the dark before.  
 What the leaves are to the forest,  
     With light and air for food,  
 Ere their sweet and tender juices  
     Have been hardened into wood,—  
 That to the world are children ;  
     Through them it feels the glow  
 Of a brighter and sunnier climate  
     Than reaches the trunks below.  
 Come to me, O ye children !  
     And whisper in my ear  
 What the birds and the winds are singing  
     In your sunny atmosphere.  
 For what are all our contrivings,  
     And the wisdom of our books,  
 When compared with your caresses  
     And the gladness of your looks ?  
 Ye are better than all the ballads  
     That ever were sung or said ;  
 For ye are living poems,  
     And all the rest are dead."—*Longfellow.*

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